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ABSTRACT

As a critical activity, academic debate potentially offers its participants a wide choice in deciding how, and on what basis, a proposition can be defended or challenged. Despite this range of possibilities, CEDA (Cross Examination Debate Association) debate at the national level has developed a consistency in the types of arguments offered and the ways in which those arguments are expected to be refuted. As an argument community, CEDA's emerging national circuit has developed powerful norms which are enforcing a particular conception of "good argument" while at the same time limiting the possibility for discussions on the conditions of argument itself. Consensual standards of what is argumentatively appropriate have evolved which strongly favor specific and temporally-bound "scenario"-based interpretations and which discourage meta-argumentative and other philosophical critiques. While the existence of strong norms in an argumentative community may be beneficial, the current norms of the national-circuit CEDA community operate to limit creativity at the highest levels of competitive debate, and to severely restrict the possibilities for those forms of argumentative self-regulation which offer the best hope for maintaining the health of the activity in an environment relatively free of externally imposed norms. (Contains 19 references.) (RS)

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Community Concepts of Argumentative Legitimacy:

Challenging Norms in National-Circuit CEDA Debate

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Complex arguments can be refuted at a variety of levels. As a critical activity, academic debate potentially offers its participants a very wide choice in deciding how, and on what basis a proposition can be defended or challenged. Despite this range of possible choice there is at the national level of CEDA debate a remarkable consistency developing in the types of arguments offered and the ways in which those arguments are expected to be refuted. This paper advances the claim that as an argument community, CEDA's emerging national circuit has developed powerful norms which are enforcing a very particular conception of "good argument" while at the same time limiting the possibility for discussions on the conditions of argument itself. Specifically, I will argue that consensual standards of what is argumentatively appropriate have evolved which strongly favor very specific and temporally-bound "scenario"-based interpretations and which discourage meta-argumentative and other philosophical critiques. While the existence of strong norms in an argument community is inevitable and beneficial, this paper will conclude that the current norms of the national-circuit CEDA community operate to limit creativity at the highest levels of competitive debate, and to severely restrict the possibilities for those forms of argumentative self-regulation which offer the best hope for maintaining the health of the activity in an environment relatively free of externally imposed norms.

I will first outline what I see as the salient points regarding the challenging of constitutive norms within an argument community. Subsequently I will apply these elements to the argument community of national circuit CEDA debate, advancing

the argument that the current community restricts internal challenges to constitutive norms. Finally, I will consider the consequences of these restrictions both in terms of the limitation of argumentative options as well as the prevention of the means of argumentative self-regulation.

Challenging Norms Within an Argument Community

No longer seen as a universal form of logical discussion, argument is increasingly being viewed in the context of community. "Arguments as objects of study," Greene (1993) notes, "are being dispersed within the social categories of fields, spheres and communities" (p. 124). This social turn has parallelled related shifts in many other areas of communication interest. The relevant issue in assessing the appropriateness of argument is context. As McKerrow (1990) notes, "perceived in terms of context, argument is discussed in terms of the 'audience' to whom it is addressed or in terms of the 'community,' 'field' or 'sphere' in which it takes place" (p. 27). Apart from more accurately representing the reality of social life, a community view of argument also has the function of revealing the points of contestation between a dominant consensus and a minority viewpoint. The relationship between argument as it is defined by the consensus of the group and argument as it is put forth by minority challengers is a relationship of great interest to those who see argument communities as sites of potential conflicts over knowledge, meaning and propriety. As Willard (1989) notes, "a social theory of

argument emphasizes the interplay between the epistemic status of ideas and their usefulness in situations and between public consensus and the doubts which individuals or groups may harbor" (p. 162). Conceiving of argument in the context of community, then, leads to a consideration of the social conflicts that both form and are formed by argument.

A community is most basically a group that shares some form of consubstantial similarity. McKerrow (1990) defines the community as "a collective group of people interacting in a space-time continuum" (p. 28). While many attempts have been made to define the unifying principle underlying the interaction of an argument community (e.g., see Rowland, 1982), definition relates most basically to discourse. "Language aimed at members or at outsiders," McKerrow (1990) explains, "constitutes the community by presenting it with those symbols by which it identifies itself" (p. 29). This emphasis on language, however, should not lead to an exclusive focus on the communication-products of a group, but should in addition include the interactions between individuals and community argument. "The evaluation of a discourse is the transformation of an audience, for when we speak of 'a discourse' we think not only of text-milieus or positions, but of people" (Willard, 1989, p. 167).

Communication within an argument community does more than express content, it also establishes limits on the appropriateness of actions. Willard (1989) explains:

> Communication isn't solely the expression of speakers' internal states. It may also be a *conventional* activity, exploiting working agreements and institutionalized methods for cooperative activity, and a *rhetorical* activity capitalizing on the arguers' ability to create and refine rules, roles, and relations - to orchestrate faces and scenes, as Goffman says, so as to maximize the possibilities for cooperative action. (p. 162)

These conventional and rhetorical standards exert a strong force and exist as norms within an argument community. These norms give form to the life and activity of the group. Maier (1989), describes constitutive norms as "more or less definite limiting conditions concerning argumentation," which include "the definition of a certain attitude for the individuals" (p. 124). These norms define not only the ideal forms of argument, but also the means and methods of achieving those forms as well. In short, constitutive norms "determine certain allowed moves when arguing, and outlaw others" (p. 132). The force of these norms effect not only those who agree to their existence, but all members of the argument community. As Maier (1989) reports, "constitutive norms can be conceived only at the price of excluding many types of argumentation" (p. 124).

Norms within an argument community perpetuate themselves in multiple ways. In addition to articulating norms through explicit behavior, arguments within communities produce claims while recursively reproducing the conditions of argument production. Norms regulate not only what is considered argument, but

also what actions may be taken - or, what moves may be made, - in the community. Referring to the personal community, Jackson (in McKerrow, 1990) explains that "the orientation of argument within this community is toward the 'propriety or acceptability of *acts*' rather than simply toward the probity of claims" (p. 33).

All of this, however, does not answer how standards evolve and change within a community. While it is possible to entertain the notion of fixed and impenetrable argumentative norms, as Willard (1989) notes, "it's better to think that any discourse is open to change" (p. 165). An *argument* community, in particular would be expected to be open to change due to the self-reflective nature of argument. At least potentially, argument holds out the possibility of challenging and revising norms because it places us in a framework in which we can look at the *conditions* of argument as well as the content of argument. This points toward the possibility that norms themselves can become the object of argument within an argument community. Such arguments, however, could not exist in an environment free of the norms they seek to change. Constitutive norms exist to regulate not only the form and discourse of the community, but also the ways in which that form might be changed.

At this level, legitimacy becomes an useful concern. The claim of legitimacy bears upon both the advocate and the message. At the level of the advocate, "legitimacy refers to the rightfulness with which an argument is put forward - is it promoted by someone with a legitimate authority to stake out a position"

(McKerrow, 1990, p. 31)? In other words, does the argument come from someone within the community who has the standing, the recognized authority, to make a claim of the kind being made? The motives of a communicator within an argument community also become relevant. Following Rowland (1982) McKerrow (1990) argues that "within communities, that purpose [of argument] must be seen as advancing the issue being deliberated; at the very least, the motive or grounds for arguing must be sanctioned by the community" (p. 31). Indeed, based upon the constitutive imperative of regulating the types of acts which occur within a community "an individual's motives or reasons for arguing may be more crucial in determining one's response than the content of the argument itself" (p. 33). At the level of the message, legitimacy can also refer to "the relevance an argument has within a particular context - is it an argument that one might expect, given the community from which it emanates" (McKerrow, 1990, p. 31)? In other words, is the claim consistent with the community that gives it birth?

In a community context this entails that if an argument is made that a.) emerges from one generally seen as not entitled to make such claims, b.) stems from a perceived motive that is not recognized as legitimate, or c.) is at odds with the perceived function or nature of the community, then that argument is likely to be seen as argumentatively weak since it violates the constitutive norms of the community. This would seem to remain true even if the argument is trying to alter precisely the norms that are denying its legitimacy.

Several principals can be drawn from this discussion of argument communities: first, viewing argument from a social perspective highlights the interplay and contestation between dominant and minority forces that often forms the context of argument; second, communities establish constitutive norms that regulate argument and the conditions of argument; third, such norms do change, but even their changes are regulated by the constitutive interests of the community; and fourth, legitimacy in particular places limits on the acceptability of arguments for altered norms by demanding that advocates have standing, that advocates operate from an accepted motive, and that the change is felt to be appropriate and relevant to the community.

A focus on the force of these conditions in specific argument communities is necessary if we are to understand the constraints and expectations which govern the practice of argument within a community and definitionaly limit the options available to arguers within that community. Goodnight (1989) explains that expectations and operating principles within groups need to be opened to criticism:

> Thus, the critical study of reason and reasoning requires reflective inquiry into the grounds upon which others are asked to make choices, so that the *risks* constituencies are asked to assume in the name of reason are fully assessed and so that the kinds of *presumptions* at work in social institutions and processes may be opened to analysis and discussion. (p. 80)

With this in mind, we examine the force of expectation in the argument community of national-circuit CEDA debate, and in particular the legitimacy requirements that are imposed on those who would question these powerful norms.

Norms Within the National-Circuit CEDA Community

In his recent article, Robert Rowland (1993) writes of "the importance of using case studies of debate practice, both to inform forensics pedagogy and as a means of testing larger issues related to argumentation theory" (p. 83). Looking at the debate community, not simply as a group of students who engage in hypothetical arguments for educational and competitive purposes, but as a community in its own right that establishes and enforces argumentative norms within its own context in a manner that is not wholly dissimilar to other forums of what we would call public argument has the advantage of applying the framework of social argumentation to aid in understanding the very real speech behaviors of this community.

It should be obvious that debate is an argument community, but the fact that we are so used to thinking of it as simply an analog of social argument suggests that debate's status as an argument community (or communities) bears discussion. Certainly debaters share a consubstantial similarity and operate as a collective in the space and time continuum of the "circuit." Debate is also defined through

discourse and possesses a code that differentiates members from outsiders. The environment is clearly characterized by the "text-milieus" "positions" and "people" identified by Willard (1989). While the entirety of academic debate, college debate, or college CEDA could be viewed as dispersed argument communities, I will focus on the community within college CEDA that has come to be called the "national-circuit." McGee (1993) characterizes this group of teams as being 'national' in outlook, not necessarily in geographical locale:

> The national circuit teams debate one another regularly at tournaments across the country, although the 'national' tournaments are disproportionately located in an area which is loosely called the 'midwest.' (p. 163)

The sense that CEDA is developing a very distinct community of schools that meet regularly at what are consensually considered to be the best tournaments in the nation is echoed by one of the anonymous interviewees for McGee's (1993) phenomenological analysis of CEDA's "next generation" of coaches:

> I think there's an emerging national circuit. I think it's emerging...in the midwest...There wasn't [in the past] this very close-knit family that defined what was good debate, and that exists now,...or is in the process of emerging. That [group] dominates nationals from quarters on,...and it dominates sweepstakes points...It is geographically centered, with a few exceptions...[in] the midwest. (editing in McGee, p. 152)

This group is not identified simply by its pattern of competition, but also based upon its perceived ability to act as exemplars for CEDA generally. McGee (1993) summarizing the sentiments of his interviewees says: "the hallmark of these national circuit teams is their consistent competitive success, and, indeed, their ability to define by example how debate 'should be,' or what it is to be a 'good' debater" (p. 152). National-circuit teams as perceived seem to have an ability not only to attain, but also to define debate success. The flow of knowledge from successful teams to the more general community is part of conventional educational wisdom. "Debaters learn how to debate," Hollihan, Baaske, and Riley (1987) note, "by mirroring the habits and practices they see in other debaters" (p. 184). The effect seems to go beyond the simple emulation of successful teams. There is a sense of 'belonging' or 'appropriateness' that attaches to a national circuit team debating at a national level that does not attach itself to other teams that are not part of this community. Indeed, teams on the outside of the national circuit were bluntly identified by one of McGee's interviewees as "whiny little teams" (p. 157).

To dismiss this sentiment as the mere elitism of a few teams is to fail to appreciate the power of consensus at this level of the community. An argument community exists within CEDA not simply at the level of language use (as described by McGee, 1992) but also at a normative level. Communication does more than identify membership. It also defines the "rules, roles, and relations" (Willard, 1989, p. 162) of the working community. The existence of a close-knit

network of 'national' level debaters creates a way of thinking, a way of including some arguments and styles of argument while excluding others. As Crenshaw (1993a) notes, a conventional form both arouses and satisfies expectations. The force of conventional practice is to impart a sense of normalcy. Further, the force of conventional practice by a perceived leadership community imparts a sense of acceptability. Speaking from her experience as a head coach of one of CEDA's most successful squads, Susan Stanfield (1993) describes the normative effect of debate practice:

> I believe that students have and will be careful caretakers. Peer pressure often limits the effectiveness of counter-intuitive arguments (e.g., the demise of domestic malthus as an argument). Sexist language is disappearing in this activity primarily due to the careful policing of students. (p. 107).

The expectations created by this caretaking role play a regulative role: "some things work, others don't" (Stanfield, 1993, p. 107). Clearly, Stanfield is focusing on the positive effects of community norms: dehumanizing arguments and language are not currently and consensually seen as appropriate. Another example of the beneficial community regulation of argument might be found in Crenshaw's (1993b) observation that the force behind debaters' reluctance to oppose feminism by arguing in favor of the oppression of women is perhaps "a cultural constraint that inhibits the introduction of this particular argument" (p. 93) but that it is "an aspect of debate culture that we should celebrate" (p. 94).

Certainly, based upon the meaning of communities themselves, there is an inevitability to normative conventions. Part of the way a community defines itself is to regulate the form and content of the discourses it creates. There are without a doubt numerous benefits to community norms. Educated advocates can, as Stanfield (1993) notes, be trusted to exclude by convention or consensus many practices which otherwise would be deleterious to the activity, oppressive toward its participants, or just plain non-sensical. The inevitability and utility of conventional norms should not, however, blind us to problems regarding the recognition of only some styles of debate as acceptable and consensually appropriate. If the parameters of acceptability are excessively narrow then argumentative options are arbitrarily limited and possibilities for community self-regulation are diminished.

Both the direction of the norms and the existence of possibilities for challenging the norms are important considerations. In national-circuit CEDA, and possibly in the larger CEDA community as well, a very specific form of argumentative practice has emerged as being consensually appropriate. It seems that a preference has emerged favoring future hypothetical causal scenarios as the presumptive means of proving or disproving any proposition. Affirmative action becomes almost universally interpreted as <u>the</u> cause or as <u>the</u> prevention of multiple disaster scenarios. As Crenshaw (1993a) explains, "common practice or convention dictates that a case or disadvantage with nefarious impacts causally related to a single link will 'outweigh' opposing claims in the mind of the judge" (p.

74). At those tournaments meeting the characterization of national-circuit virtually every round will feature an affirmative defending more or less specific policies which stave off a specific disaster scenario while a negative articulates an equally specific scenario linking to affirmative's implied policy and causing a specific disaster scenario. "Debaters practice the convention of establishing single-cause relationships to large monolithic impacts" Crenshaw (1993a) argues, "in order to conform to audience expectation." The causal norm is adopted and followed, she says, because debaters "are rewarded for it by judges" (p. 74). The single cause that Crenshaw identifies as judicial, however, seems too simple. Conventions are not imposed so much as they emerge consensually from all participants. The judges, often recent debaters themselves, are arguably influenced by and participating in the same normative conventions that drive the debaters. Clearly debaters are following specific causal conventions because those conventions fit a collective view of "good debate." Events with complex social causes are called "non-unique" by their respected colleagues. In contrast, artificially mono-causal scenarios possess an "absolute link." To construct or to respond to the argument has the additional effect of recursively constructing the conditions of argument, establishing a framework and an expected form for "causal" argument.

Apart from the harms of distorted causality and disparagement of rhetorical proof articulated by Crenshaw (1993a), the prevalence and normative force of scenario-based debate also has the consequence of limiting argumentative options. Despite wide-spread complaints about "theory" arguments, meta-argumentative

claims are seldom present in rounds between perceived national-circuit teams at national-circuit tournaments. When theory arguments are used, they are generally seen by both sides as strategic devices designed to "time-suck" the affirmative, not as genuine argumentative options. While a recent survey of CEDA coaches found reactions to the statement "there are too many theory arguments in CEDA debate" to rest midway between "agree" and "disagree" (Withycombe, 1993) at the level of the national-circuit a very strong consensus has emerged which rejects theory arguments.

This consensus against theory is found in the sentiments of individual debaters as well as in the attitudes of prominent national-circuit coaches. A recent exchange between speeches in a debate between a team from Kansas and a team from Oklahoma involving an affirmative saying, "no theory goo, thank God!" and the negative responding, "Hey, you were cool with us." This highlights the implied reciprocity of the argument: we all agree that to make meta-argumentative claims is to identify oneself as an outsider. When one team attempted to articulate a causality based meta-level argument, their more highly seeded opponents responded with, "they watched us in outrounds at the last tournament, they could've found a disad." The opportunity to conform to the expected form of argument is considered reason enough to reject alternate forms of argument. First affirmative constructive language pre-empting procedural argument, such as that found in a speech at a recent midwestern tournament, is becoming increasingly prevalent: "Substantive arguments outweigh procedurals. Negative has a burden

to respond to case. They should not shirk that burden by hiding behind arguments based on semantics."

It is the acceptability of the *act*, and not simply the claim, that is being evaluated. To *choose* a non-accepted style of argument when other options are available is to engage in a behavior that reveals a perceived *motive* that is unacceptable in national-circuit CEDA: the avoidance of (preferred) argument.

While meta-level debate technically remains an option in the national-circuit, it is clearly not viewed as just one among many argumentative options. It is either seen as a last resort, or as a punishment that should be reserved for teams that are the most abusive. For example, in a recent round which featured a negative team making an advocacy critique against an affirmative that was advocating the John Birch Society's paranoid vision of a world-wide conspiracy, one judge told the affirmative, "you deserve to have stuff like this run against you." Arguments concerning the effects of advocacy, and other argumentative critiques, are not seen as worthwhile in their own right, but only as a way of sanctioning those who violate other (more strongly held) consensual norms.

Equivocating improved debate practice and a decline in meta-level discussion, Stanfield (1993) notes,

> the quality of CEDA rounds has improved. debaters seem less obsessed with generic 'procedural' arguments, more focused upon the genuine ramifications of their arguments. (p. 103).

The notion of "genuine" argument is here apparently including only causal

advantages and disadvantages which exist within the hypothetical world created by affirmative's action. Clearly what is excluded is any discussion of how the debate should be carried out or any discussion of the real effects of advocacy on participants. McGee (1992) notes that the argument for a resolutional focus, once a very common and at times very developed claim offered by national-circuit teams, has now fallen from favor. Today, to argue that the resolution is the focus (or to argue anything that sounds suspiciously similar to that claim) is to experience contempt from one's opponent and often one's judge as well. Current national-circuit debaters have inherited a *received* consensus that arguments for resolutional focus don't work. Today's competitors were still in high-school when this issue was debated by the "legitimacy bearing" teams of the day. They only arrived to hear the verdict and to receive a file of faded response blocks. This verdict may explain, and may be explained by, the ascendence of squads whose traditional style has been to reject the appropriateness of resolutional arguments. Independent of its origin, however, it is difficult to argue that today's national-circuit permits a broad spectrum of argumentative response. The best teams have disadvantages to affirmative's implications, and those disadvantages have a remarkable formal similarity. The term "goo" has become a prevalent terministic screen for the evaluation of all other arguments, whether they are criterial, language-based, resolutional, or based in a conception of causality other than the narrow frame described by Crenshaw (1993a).

The Consequences of Over-Consensus

While consensus is often assumed to be a desirable goal, in an argument community, and particularly in an argumentative laboratory, over-consensus can cause an unhealthy narrowing of the terms of discourse, and dissensus can be valued for itself.

The increasing influence of consensual norms may be seen as the natural effects of a maturation of a competitive community. As McGee (1992) has observed, "our argument community is well-defined, and the entry barriers placed in the way of membership in this community are said to be growing" (p. 23). The positing of national-circuit CEDA as a mature argument community that increasingly establishes and enforces very specific norms has the consequence of highlighting the relationship between the community's dominant consensus and the inherent possibilities for challenging that consensus. Such a focus answers Willard's (1989) call for attention to the interplay between knowledge as it is socially established by the group, and the doubts that individuals in the group might harbor.

The force and direction of these national-circuit competitive norms has two major consequences: reduced argumentative options, and a decreased capacity for self regulation.

Maier's (1989) observation that "constitutive norms can be conceived only at the price of excluding many types of argumentation" (p. 124) is bourne out in

the relationship between meta-level argumentative options and the current preference for scenario-based debate. It is not just the teams that reject theory or philosophical debate that are influenced by this consensus - but all teams that desire to compete at the national level. Others have advanced the argument that theoretical argumentation in debate rounds is beneficial in itself (e.g., Gass, 1987; Ulrich, 1984). I think it is important to add the observation that the possibility for theory debate must be an option which is not stigmatized by current norms in order to maintain a diversity of argument and in order to ensure that the exemplar teams of national-circuit CEDA have the opportunity to develop and improve this form of argumentation.

The irony is that we have a thriving argument community with an active and enforced hostility toward consideration of argument, per se. It is not my intent to argue that all theory debate is good debate. It remains certainly true that many of Gass's (1987) guidelines for theoretical argument are not met in many procedural arguments. Much of the blame for this situation, however, must be placed on the fact that theory debate as presently constituted is practiced only at the margins. The perceived 'best teams' of CEDA have agreed that the best negative argument is a cataclysmic disadvantage with a short time-frame.

Meta-level debate, done well, intuitively involves a high level of creative synthesis in asking its advocates to "argue about arguing." Certainly meta-argument is more difficult than debate which takes the conditions of comparison for granted and bases itself on a search for the best evidence. In this context it

should be unsurprising that the difficulty of theory debate manifests itself in poorer quality debates. But unless we are prepared to accept that all argumentative assumptions and guidelines should be developed in other forums and simply imposed on the debate round, the theoretical option needs to become a non-stigmatized option, and an option that the best teams are willing to develop and improve.

A failure to consensually permit meta-debate means that debaters are reduced to acting out a received view of argument. Such a situation relates to the second major consequence of the community's over-consensus on the issue of theory: when norms cannot be discursively challenged, self regulation becomes impossible.

Willard (1989) has noted that "argument is a ductile phenomenon - as open to change as arguers are open to suggestion" (p. 165). When there is high level of agreement about the 'best form' or argument, then independent of the validity of that agreement there is a correspondingly low level of possibility for change. In the current CEDA community, this creates a danger in the form of a paralyzed ability to change the debate process through the use of the debate process.

McKerrow (1990) has articulated the options of community rule following in stark terms: a community follows rules either because of choice, conditioning, or edicts from those in authority. Maier (1989) explains, "norms in argumentation, as regulations of preparatory actions, are either applied to this action system from the outside or they are derived from these actions themselves" (p. 137). The

alternative to self regulation in an argument community is external control. If norms and practices cannot be questioned from within a community, then that community risks a loss of autonomy.

A turn toward external regulation of the in-round debate experience is becoming increasingly apparent in the CEDA community. Academic debate has always been a self-critical activity, but the last few years have witnessed an increasing focus on problems within the activity and a perceived gulf between CEDA as it is and CEDA as it should be. In 1991, the CEDA National Assessment Conference became a flash point for recognizing that academic debate is facing a variety of organizational and philosophical crises. In the published proceedings one finds the repeatedly expressed fears of coaches that CEDA is going down the wrong path, and needs to be controlled. Most often that form of control is to be exercised by non-debaters - judges and directors who are encouraged to play a greater role in determining what practices will be considered acceptable (e.g., Horn & Underberg, 1993). Frank (1993) puts it plainly:

> However, if we are to save the activity from itself, then we may need to institute draconian procedures and students may need to sacrifice some of their freedoms. (p. 90)

While it is not at all problematic to say that judges and directors have a role to play within the community, it is another thing to say that the debate round has failed and is furthermore incapable of addressing its own problems. As Willard (1989) notes, it is better to think that discourse is capable of change. But it is

difficult to challenge the conclusions of Frank (1993), Horn and Underberg (1993) and many others at the conference. While we may not all agree with their specific preferences, it does seem implausible to suggest that the current debate community is capable of fixing itself. Stanfield (1993) suggests that "by allowing students the freedom to decide their own fate, they are putting the market place of ideas into action," (p. 107) but the familiar problems of the market place construct apply to national-circuit CEDA as well: if some ideas are presumptively stigmatized or seen as out of step with the forum, then openness and choice risks becoming an illusion. It is not plausible in today's national-circuit climate to envision a team with credibility using the debate forum to argue that speed limits comprehensibility, that causal analysis needs to account for complexity, that militaristic discourse decreases critical thinking, or that argumentative aggression and dehumanization should not be tolerated. Appeals such as these emerge most frequently from coaches, because that is where we see the power of external critique residing.

This is a weakness in our argument community. The central dilemma is that we either allow the debate process to be more self regulative or we accede to the demands of those who would like to reform the process from the outside. Historically, there is not much evidence to recommend the success of an external rules-based approach (see Herbeck & Katsulas, 1988). The logical and ethical weaknesses of the current debate community will change if and when teams with credibility are capable of arguing that they should change, or at least are capable of demonstrating that such issues could be honestly considered in the debate forum.

The solution to the current climate calling for external regulations is for those within the community to begin seeing preferred norms as flexible practices and not firm indicators of the status of teams. External restraint, the logical alternative to self regulation, cripples the argument community:

> Such an exteriority is in contradiction to the self-reflective nature of argumentation. It would prescribe a strict boundary to self reflection, restricting it to a definite area, and that is really a deadly condition for self reflection. Such an unwanted consequence is better avoided. A way of avoiding such a consequence consists of conceiving constitutive norms as incomplete and/or multiple. Then no strict restriction of self-reflection exists any more. (Maier, 1989, p. 137)

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